

Notes, Short Comments, and Answers to Correspondents.

VITAL STATISTICS IN JAMAICA, 1919.

DURING the year 1918 the population of Jamaica had decreased in numbers, partly owing to an excess of emigration over immigration, but chiefly on account of a severe visitation of influenza and pneumonia, which caused 5877 deaths, or 22.2 per cent. of the total mortality. During 1919 the excess of emigration continued, so that in spite of an increase in the military strength of 6860, there has been a net loss since 1911 of 23,971, giving a mean estimated population on June 30th, 1919, of 891,052. The birth-rate was 33.5 per 1000, slightly less than in 1917 and 1918, in each of which years it was 34.1. The enormous proportion of illegitimate births in Jamaica not only continues, but increases. In 1908-09 of every 100 births registered 60.59 were illegitimate; in 1918 the percentage was 68.6; in 1919 it was 70.07 (the actual number being 20,964), this being the eleventh year in succession that an increase in the ratio has been reported. The lowest ratio was in St. Ann's parish (61.36), the highest in St. James (77.41). The death-rate, 22.2 per 1000, shows a reversion to the island's normal condition after the influenza visitation in 1918, when the ratio was 33.0; in 1917 it had been 26.9, and in 1915, 22.5. The ratios in different parishes varied from 17.1 in Manchester and 17.7 in St. Elizabeth to 26.0 in Kingston and 32.6 in St. Andrew. Obviously such wide variation cannot be due to climate. The infantile death-rate, 16.1 (under 12 months) per 100 births, was less than in either of the four years preceding (17.5 to 18.4). It is to be regretted that, of the total deaths registered (19,857) throughout the colony, in 73.6 per cent. the cause was not certified by a medical practitioner, and that the proportion of deaths so registered shows no sign of diminution during recent years. Mr. David Balfour, the Registrar-General, states that even in Kingston, where lack of medical facilities can hardly be given as an excuse, the rate has an upward tendency. There was, however, one prosecution under the Registration Law for failure to register a death, and this was followed by conviction.

BLIND MASSEURS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In an extract from the "Notes, Short Comments, and Answers to Correspondents" in the issue of THE LANCET for Nov. 13th I was very glad to read the remarks with reference to blind masseurs, in whom I am much interested. I had considerable experience of the work of these men when in command of the Third London General Hospital during the war, and very cordially endorse those remarks. The whole question of massage is a very serious one for the medical profession, as we are held responsible for the results of the treatment we recommend, and when there are so many trained and certificated masseurs and masseuses in the country as there are to-day it is our duty towards our patients to make sure that, when we prescribe massage, it is carried out by trained workers, who have obtained the certificates of recognised training societies, such as the Incorporated Society of Trained Masseurs (since reconstructed as the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics), and not by people who have had no training, or who are merely acquiring practice without having undergone a thorough training.

May I accentuate the fact that all members of the Association of Certificated Blind Masseurs referred to in the extract have been thoroughly trained and hold recognised qualifications? Finally, too much stress cannot be laid upon the fact that the members of the Association only undertake the treatment of patients with the consent and advice of a registered medical practitioner.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

BRUCE BRUCE-PORTER.

Grosvenor-street, W., Nov. 15th, 1920.

NERVOUS BREAKDOWN IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

UNTIL a short time ago the Lady Chichester Hospital for Women and Children at Hove, Sussex, was the only hospital in the United Kingdom devoted to the care in its early stages of nervous breakdown among women and children. The ninth annual report, for the year ending June, 1920, provides a short survey of its work for the past 15 years, during which time women and children have come to it from all parts of the country, and even from such distant places as Egypt and Nigeria. The experience of the hospital confirms the arguments in favour of establishing clinics for the treatment of mental disease in connexion with the general hospitals. Under the present system no hospital treatment is provided for the majority of mental patients

until they have reached the certifiable and relatively incurable stage. What is urgently wanted for sufferers from mental disorder is the same prompt and easy access to treatment as is at the command of the sufferers from any physical disease. Of the value of such prompt treatment the survey here given affords interesting proof. A hundred consecutive cases treated at the Lady Chichester Hospital are analysed. They were of all ages, from 6-83 years, and came from all parts of the country and from many different occupations. Of the hundred, 54 were completely cured; 22 left the hospital without showing any improvement, none of them being a genuinely early case. Some had been ill for years, and might have been cured if they had been treated in time. Unfortunately, the hospital often has a waiting list five times as numerous as the patients under treatment.

WANTED—A COPY OF THE LANCET.

A correspondent has asked us to obtain for him a copy of THE LANCET of Sept. 14th, 1907. If any of our readers possess a copy, we shall be much obliged if they would mention the price which should be paid for it.

POOR-LAW INFIRMARY RECONSTRUCTION AT STEYNING.

SUGGESTIONS having been made by the medical officer for the better use of the infirmary as a surgical hospital and for other purposes, the Steyning (Sussex) Board of Guardians have decided that a room formerly used as a dispensary be fitted up for use as an operating theatre for minor operations. There are two objects in view: (1) To give the nurses better facilities in regard to their training; and (2) to be able to receive paying patients; while, still further, the medical officer has been requested to form a scheme to make the infirmary separate and distinct from the workhouse. In the discussion it was stated that the ratepayers would not be called upon to pay one penny in respect of the paying patients treated, this being self-supporting. The proposed charges for paying patients are £2 2s. to £3 3s., according to means, the medical officer's and anaesthetist's fees to be paid in addition for minor operations; and £1 11s. 6d. to £3 3s., according to means, and the other fees as in the previous category in addition, for maternity cases.

THE EFFECT OF FEEDING WITH THYROID PITUITARY AND PROSTATE.

WE have already given some of the recent results of the thyroid feeding.¹ E. R. and M. M. Hopkins, *Endocrinology*, April, 1920, find that feeding of normal frog tadpoles with tablets made from the anterior lobe of the hypophysis and sugar of milk accelerates the metamorphosis. If at the beginning of the experiments the tadpoles are very small, the frogs after the metamorphosis are never so large as the control animals, and they are feebler. If tadpoles deprived of their thyroids, and hence, as far as we know, unlikely to undergo metamorphosis, are fed with the tablets metamorphosis begins within 24 hours, and advances rather slower than in normal animals, but a complete metamorphosis is not arrived at. It would thus appear that both the thyroid and pituitary glands are related to metamorphosis. It is highly doubtful if the result depends on traces of iodine. Other tissues containing iodine have not the same effect. The two glands stand physiologically in intimate relation the one to the other and can to a certain extent replace one another. The action of the two glands on tadpoles may be stated thus. The removal of the thyroids accelerates growth, leads to hyperplasia of the pituitary, but delays metamorphosis. Removal of the hypophysis slows growth of the animal and the development of the thyroid, retards metamorphosis, and delays the development of the cutaneous pigment. Feeding normal tadpoles with thyroid or pituitary substance accelerates metamorphosis. Feeding similar substances in thyroidless larvæ discharges, as it were, the missing metamorphosis. If hypophysis is fed to larvæ without their hypophysis growth is excited, but metamorphosis does not take place. Iodine seems to be able to discharge metamorphosis in larvæ deprived of either of these glands.

D. I. Macht has studied the effects of prostate feeding on the growth and development of tadpoles of certain species of rana, bufo, and amblyostoma.² Feeding was begun at an early stage—three weeks and continued for several weeks; pig's liver was also given, the controls getting only the latter in some cases with the addition of parotid and ovary. Prostate tissue was obtained from rams, bulls, and oxen, and sometimes human gland was obtainable. In all cases prostate feeding accelerated growth and metamorphosis. This may be due to an internal secretion of the prostate. In any case the prostate of the bull exerted a greater effect on tadpoles than that of the ox.

¹ THE LANCET, Sept. 4th, p. 509.

² Journal of Neurology, April, 1920.